1 JOHN 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Faith is Victory Over the World	Obedience by Faith	Victorious Faith	Our Victory Over the World	
	4:20-5:5			
5:1-5		5:1-5	5:1-5	The Source of Faith
The Witness Concerning the Son	The Certainty of God's Witness		The Witness About Jesus Christ	5:5-13
5:6-12	5:6-13	5:6-12	5:6-12	
The Knowledge of Eternal Life		Conclusion	Eternal Life	
5:13-15	Confidence and Compassion in Prayer	5:13	5:13-15	Prayer for Sinners
	5:14-17	5:14-17		5:14-17
5:16-17	Knowing the True, Rejecting the False		5:16-17	Summary of the Letter
5:18-21	5:18-21	5:18-20	5:18	5:18-21
			5:19	
			5:20	
		5:21	5:21	

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:1-4

[1]Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. [2]By this we know that *we* love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. [3]For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. [4]For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith.

5:1 "Whoever" (twice) The term *pas* is used repeatedly in 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:29;3:3,4,6 [twice] 9,10; 4:7; 5:1). No one is excluded from John's black or white theological categories. This is the universal invitation of God to accept Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is similar to Paul's great invitation in Rom. 10:9-13 (cf. Joel 2:32).

▣ **"believes"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This is the Greek word (noun – *pistis*; VERB – *pisteuō*) which can be translated "faith," "trust," or "believe." However, in 1 John and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) it is often used in a sense of doctrinal content (cf. Jude 1:3,20). In the Gospels and Paul it is used for personal trust and commitment. The gospel is both truths to believe and a person to trust and, as 1 John and James make clear, a life of love and service to be lived.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JOHN'S USE OF THE VERB "BELIEVE"

▣ **"that Jesus is the Christ"** The essence of the false teachers' error centers around the person and work of the man Jesus, who was also fully incarnate deity (cf. 1 John 5:5). Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah! The Messiah is surprisingly (i.e., from the OT) also divine. This phrase was an oath, possibly at baptism (cf. 1 John 2:22), with the added phrase "the Son of God" (cf. 1 John 4:15; 5:5). For sure this affirmation of Jesus' Messiahship related to people with an OT background (i.e., Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

▣ **"is born of God"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE which emphasizes a culmination of an action, produced by an outside agent (God, cf. 1 John 5:4,18; 2:29) into a permanent state of being.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BORN AGAIN

NASB	**"loves the *child* born of Him"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"loves him who is begotten of Him"**
NRSV	**"loves the parent loves the child"**
TEV	**"loves the father loves his child also"**
NJB	**"loves the father loves the son"**

This phrase probably refers to the Father loving Jesus because of the use of

1. the SINGULAR
2. the AORIST TENSE;
3. the false teachers' attempts to theologically separate Jesus from the Father

However, it could relate to the recurrent theme of Christians loving one another (cf. 1 John 5:2) because we all have one Father.

5:2 This verse, along with 1 John 5:3, repeats one of the major themes of 1 John. Love, God's love, is expressed by ongoing love (cf. 1 John 2:7-11; 4:7-21) and obedience (cf. 1 John 2:3-6). Notice the evidences of a true believer.

1. loves God
2. loves God's child (1 John 5:1)
3. loves God's children (1 John 5:2)
4. obeys (1 John 5:2,3)
5. overcomes (1 John 5:4-5)

▣ **"the children of God"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: CHILDREN OF GOD

5:3 "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments" The GENITIVE could be OBJECTIVE or SUBJECTIVE or a combination. Love is not sentimental but action oriented, both on God's part and on ours. Obedience is crucial (cf. 1 John 2:3-4; 3:22,24; John 14:15,21,23; 15:10; 2 John 6; Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: KEEP

▣ **"His commandments are not burdensome"** The new covenant does have responsibilities (cf. Matt. 11:29-30, where Jesus uses the word "yoke"; the rabbis used it for the laws of Moses, Matt. 23:4). They flow out of our relationship with God, but do not form the basis of that relationship, which is based on God's grace, not human performance or merit (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Eph. 2:8-9,10). Jesus' guidelines are very different from the false teachers, who either had no rules (antinomian) or too many rules (legalists)! I must admit that the longer I serve God by serving His people I am more and more afraid of the two extremes of libertinism and legalism.

SPECIAL TOPIC: USE OF "COMMANDMENT" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

5:4

NASB, NKJV, NRSV	**"For whatever is born of God"**
TEV, NJB, REB	**"because every child of God"**
Peshitta	**"For whoever is born of God"**

The Greek text puts the word "all" (*pas*) first for emphasis, as in 1 John 5:1. The NEUTER SINGULAR (*pan*) is used which is translated "whatever." However, the context demands a personal connotation (i.e., the generic sense) because it is combined with the PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE of "begotten." It is one who believes in Jesus and has been born of God who overcomes the world (cf. 1 John 4:4; 2:13,14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BORN AGAIN

▣ **"overcomes the world"** "Overcomes" is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE of *nikaō* (cf. 1 John 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4,5). The same root is used twice more in 1 John 5:4.

1. the NOUN, "victory," *nikē*
2. the AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, *nikaō*, "has overcome"

Jesus has already conquered the world (PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, cf. John 16:33). Because believers stay in union with Him, they also have the power to overcome the world (cf. 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4).

The term "world" here means "human society organized and functioning apart from God." An attitude of independence is the essence of the Fall and human rebellion (cf. Genesis 3).

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOSMOS* (world)

▣ **"the victory"** This is the NOUN form (*nikos*) of the VERB "has overcome." At the end of 1 John 5:4 the AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of the same root is used. Then again in 1 John 5:5 another

PARTICIPLE form of *nikos* is used. Believers are overcomers and continue to be overcomers in and through Christ's victory over the world. The word "nike," so popular today as a manufacturer of tennis shoes, is the Greek name for the goddess of victory.

▣ **"our faith"** This is the only use of the NOUN form of the term "faith" (*pistis*) in all the writings of John! Possibly John was worried about an overemphasis on "correct theology" (as a system of beliefs) versus daily Christlikeness. The VERB (*pisteuō*) is used extensively by John. Our faith brings victory because

1. it is linked to Jesus' victory
2. it is linked to our new relationship with God
3. it is linked to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit

See notes at John 1:7; 2:23; and 1 John 2:10.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:5-12

5Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 6This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. 7It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 8For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. 9If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. 10The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

5:5 "Jesus is the Son of God" This verse clearly defines the content of our faith, which is mentioned in 1 John 5:4. Our victory is our profession/confession of trust in Jesus, who is both fully man and fully God (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). Notice that believers affirm that Jesus is

1. the Messiah (1 John 5:1)
2. child of God (1 John 5:1)
3. Son of God (1 John 5:5,10)
4. the Life (cf. 1 John 1:2; 5:20)

See following Special Topic which lists all the *hoti* CLAUSES connected to the VERB "believe."

SPECIAL TOPIC: JOHN'S USE OF "BELIEVE" WITH PREPOSITIONS

▣ **"Son of God"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD

5:6 "This is the One who came" This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE which emphasizes the Incarnation (Jesus as both man and God) and His sacrificial death, both of which the false teachers denied.

▣ **"by water and blood"** It seems that "water" refers to Jesus' physical birth (cf. John 3:1-9) and "blood" refers to His physical death. In the context of the Gnostic false teachers' rejection of Jesus' true humanity, these two experiences summarize and reveal His humanity.

A second option related to the Gnostic false teachers (Cerinthus) is that "water" refers to Jesus' baptism. They asserted that the "Christ spirit" came upon the man Jesus at His baptism (water) and left before the man Jesus' death on the cross (blood, see a good summary in NASB Study Bible, p. 1835).

A third option is to relate the phrase to Jesus' death. The spear caused "blood and water" (cf. John 19:34) to pour out. The false teachers depreciated Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary death.

▣ **"It is the Spirit who testifies"** The role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the gospel. He is that part of the Trinity who convicts of sin, leads to Christ, baptizes into Christ, and forms Christ in the believer (cf. John 16:7-15). The Spirit always witnesses of Christ, not Himself (cf. John 15:26).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

▣ **"the Spirit is the truth"** See John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" (the concept) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUE" (the term) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

5:7 There is some confusion in the English translations as to where 1 John 5:6,7, and 8 begin and end. The portion of 1 John 5:7 that is found in the KJV which says "in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one," is not found in the three major ancient uncial Greek manuscripts of the NT: Alexandrinus (A), Vaticanus (B), or Sinaiticus (א), nor in the Byzantine family of manuscripts. It appears in only four late minuscule manuscripts.

1. MS 61, dated in the 16th century
2. MS 88 dated in the 12th century, where the passage is inserted in the margin by a later hand
3. MS 629, dated in the 14th or 15th century
4. MS 635, dated in the 11th century, where the passage is inserted in the margin by a later hand

This verse is not quoted by any of the Early Church Fathers, even in their doctrinal debates over the Trinity. It is absent from all ancient versions except one late Latin manuscript family (*Sixto-Clementine*). It is not in the Old Latin or Jerome's Vulgate. It appears first in a treatise by the Spanish heretic Priscillian, who died in A.D. 385. It was quoted by Latin Fathers in North Africa and Italy in the 5th century. This verse is simply not part of the original inspired words of 1 John.

The biblical doctrine of one God but with three personal manifestations (Father, Son, and Spirit) is not affected by the rejection of this verse. Although it is true that the Bible never uses the word "trinity," many biblical passages speak of all three persons of the Godhead acting together:

1. at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16-17)
2. the great commission (Matt. 28:19)
3. the Spirit sent (John 14:26)
4. Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:33-34)
5. Paul's discussion of flesh and spirit (Rom. 8:7-10)
6. Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-6)
7. Paul's travel plans (2 Cor. 1:21-22)
8. Paul's benediction (2 Cor. 13:14)
9. Paul's discussion of the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4-6)
10. Paul's prayer of praise to the Father (Eph. 1:3-14)
11. Paul's discussion of the Gentiles' former alienation (Eph. 2:18)
12. Paul's discussion of the oneness of God (Eph. 4:4-6)
13. Paul's discussion of the kindness of God (Titus 3:4-6)
14. Peter's introduction (1 Pet. 1:2)

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

5:8 "the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement" In the OT two or three witnesses were needed to confirm a matter (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Here, the historical events of Jesus' life are given as a witness to His full humanity and deity. In this verse, "water" and "blood" are mentioned again along with "the Spirit." The terms "water" and "blood" are mentioned in 1 John 5:6. The "Spirit" may refer to Jesus' baptism because of the dove descending. There is some disagreement about the exact historical allusion that each of these three represents. They must relate to the false teachers' rejection of Jesus' true humanity.

5:9 "If" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. The churches John was writing to were confused because they apparently had heard the preaching or teaching of the Gnostic teachers.

▣ **"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater"** This divine testimony, in context, refers to

1. the Holy Spirit's witness
2. the Apostolic witness to Jesus' earthly life and death (e.g., 1 John 1:1-3)

▣ **"that He has testified concerning His Son"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which implies an action in the past that has come to a state of culmination and is abiding. This may refer to God's vocal affirmations at Jesus' baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17) or at His transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5; John 5:32,37; 8:18) or the recording of both in Scripture (i.e., the Gospels).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS

5:10 "has the testimony in himself" It is possible to interpret this phrase in two ways.

1. the subjective internal witness of the Spirit in believers (cf. Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6)
2. the truth of the gospel (cf. Rev. 6:10; 12:17; 19:10)

▣ **"has made Him a liar"** This is another PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Those who reject the Apostolic witness about Jesus reject God (cf. 1 John 5:12) because they make God a liar.

▣ **"because he has not believed"** This is another PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which emphasizes the settled condition of the unregenerate.

5:11-12 "that God has given us eternal life" This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE which speaks of a past act or completed act (cf. John 3:16).

1. Eternal life is defined in John 17:3.
2. In some instances the phrase refers to Jesus Himself (cf. 1 John 1:2; 5:20).
3. In others it is a gift from God (cf. 1 John 2:25; 5:11; John 10:28), which is received through faith in Christ (cf. 1 John 5:13; John 3:16).
4. One cannot be in fellowship with the Father without personal faith in the Son!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:13-15

[13]These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. [14]This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15]And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

5:13 "believe in the name" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which emphasizes continuing belief. This is not a magical or mystical use of the name (like Jewish mysticism based on the names of God, *Kabbalah*), but the OT use of the name as a substitute for the person.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JOHN'S USE OF "BELIEVE"

▣ **"that you may know"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE (*oida* is PERFECT in form, but is translated as PRESENT). Assurance of one's salvation is a key concept, and an often stated purpose of 1 John. There are two Greek synonyms (*oida* and *ginōskō*) used throughout the letter/sermon which are translated "know." It is obvious that assurance is the heritage of all believers! It is also obvious that because of the local situation then and the cultural context now that there are true believers who do not have assurance. This verse is theologically similar to the closing of the Gospel of John (cf. 1 John 20:31).

The closing context of 1 John (5:13-20) lists seven things that believers know. Their knowledge of gospel truths provides a worldview, which when combined with personal faith in Christ, is the bedrock foundation of assurance.

1. believers have eternal life (1 John 5:13, *oida*, PERFECT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE)
2. God hears believers' prayers (1 John 5:14, *oida*, PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
3. God answers believers' prayers (1 John 5:15, *oida*, PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
4. believers are born of God (1 John 5:18, *oida*, PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
5. believers are of (out of) God (1 John 5:19, *oida*, PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
6. believers know the Messiah has come and given them understanding (1 John 5:20, *oida*, PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
7. believers know the true one - either the Father or the Son (1 John 5:20, *ginōskō*, PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

5:14 "the confidence which we have before Him" This is a recurrent theme (cf. 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17). It expresses the boldness or freedom we have in approaching God (cf. Heb. 4:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS (*parrhēsia*)

▣ **"if"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means potential action.

▣ **"we ask anything according to His will"** John's statements seem to be unlimited in the believer's ability to beseech God. How and for what one prays is another evidence of a true believer. However, on further examination, we realize that prayer is not asking for our will, but asking for God's will in our lives (cf. 1 John 3:22; Matt. 6:10; Mark 14:36). See fuller note at 1 John 3:22.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAYER, UNLIMITED YET LIMITED

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

5:15 "if" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE (but with *ean* and the INDICATIVE, see A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 243) which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. This is an unusual conditional sentence.

1. it has *ean* instead of *ei* (cf. Acts 8:31; 1 Thess. 3:8)
2. it has *ean* connected to a SUBJUNCTIVE (i.e., ask), which is the normal grammatical construction for a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL
3. there are THIRD CLASS CONDITIONALS in 1 John 5:14 and 16

4. the theology of Christian prayer linked to God's will (1 John 5:14) and Jesus' name (1 John 5:13)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

▣ **"we know"** This is another PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, translated as a PRESENT, which is parallel to 1 John 5:14. It is the believer's assurance that the Father hears and responds to His children.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:16-17

16If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. 17All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.

5:16 "If" This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL which means potential action. 1 John 5:16 emphasizes our need to pray for our fellow Christians (cf. Gal. 6:1; James 5:13-18) within some suggested limits (not for the sin unto death), which is related to the false teachers (cf. 2 Peter 2).

▣ **"sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death"** John has listed several categories of sin. Some relate to one's

1. fellowship with deity
2. fellowship with other believers
3. fellowship with the world

The ultimate sin is rejection of trust/belief/faith in Jesus Christ. This is the sin unto ultimate death! W. T. Conners in his *Christian Doctrine*, says:

> "This does not mean, however, unbelief in the sense of a refusal to accept a doctrine or a dogma. It is unbelief in one's rejection of moral and spiritual light, particularly as that light is embodied in Jesus Christ. It is the rejection of God's final revelation of himself as made in Christ. When this rejection becomes definite and wilful, it becomes the sin unto death (1 John 5:13-17). It thus becomes moral suicide. It is putting out one's own spiritual eyes. It does not take place except in connection with a high degree of enlightenment. It is deliberate, wilful, malicious rejection of Christ as God's revelation, knowing that he is such a revelation. It is deliberately calling white black" (pp. 135-136).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT IS SIN UNTO DEATH?

▣ **"*God* will for him give life"** The theological and lexical problem here is the meaning of the term "life" (*zoē*). Normally in John's writings this refers to eternal life, but in this context it seems to mean restoration to health or forgiveness (i.e., much like James' use of "save" in James 5:13-15). The person prayed for is called "a brother" which strongly implies a believer (by John's own use of the term for his readers).

5:17 All sin is serious, but all sin can be forgiven through repentance (initial, cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21; continuing, cf. 1 John 1:9) and faith in Christ except the sin of unbelief!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:18-20

18We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. 19We know that we are of God, and that the whole

world lies in *the power* of the evil one. [20]And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

5:18 "We know" See notes in second paragraph at 1 John 5:13.

▣ **"no one who is born of God sins"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This is the black and white assertion of 1 John 3:6 and 9. Eternal life has observable characteristics. The antinomian false teachers' lifestyles reveal their unregenerate hearts (cf. Matthew 7)!

John was addressing two different kinds of false teachers. One who denied any involvement in sin (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:1) and another group that simply made sin irrelevant (cf. 1 John 3:4-10 and here). Sin must be initially confessed and existentially avoided. Sin is the problem, a problem, and continually a problem (cf. 1 John 5:21).

Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* (p. 718) asserts that the manuscript variation is based on what the copyist thought the phrase "born of God" referred to.

1. Jesus – then *auton* fits best (MSS A^*, B^*)
2. believers – then *eauton* fits best (MSS ℵ, A^c)

The UBS^4 gives #1 a "B" rating (almost cetain).

▣ **"but He who was born of God keeps him"** The first VERB is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE which implies a completed act accomplished by an outside agent (i.e., the Spirit cf. Rom. 8:11). This refers to the Incarnation.

The second VERB is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE with "him" (*auton*). This is literally, "the One who was born of God continues to keep him." This refers to Christ's continual sustaining of the believer. This translation follows the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts of A^* and B^*. This interpretation is found in the English translations NASB, RSV, and NIV.

Manuscripts ℵ and A^c have another PRONOUN, "keeps himself" (*eauton*) which implies that the one born of God has some responsibility in keeping himself. The VERB used here for "was born" is not used elsewhere of Jesus. The reflexive concept is used of believers in 1 John 3:3 and 5:21. This is followed by the English translations KJV and ASV.

NASB	**"and the evil one does not touch him"**
NKJV	**"the wicked one does not touch him"**
NRSV	**"the evil one does not touch them"**
TEV	**"the Evil One cannot harm them"**
NJB	**"the Evil One has no hold over him"**
REB	**"and the evil one cannot touch him"**
Peshitta	**"and the evil one does not come near him"**

This is PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE which means the evil one cannot continue "laying hold of him." The only other use of this term in John's writings is in John 20:17. It is obvious from the Bible and experience that Christians are tempted. There have been three major theories about the meaning of this phrase.

1. believers are free from the condemnation of the evil one based on violation of the law (justification)
2. Jesus prays for us (cf. 1 John 2:1; Luke 22:32-33; Heb. 7:25; 9:24)
3. Satan cannot wrestle our salvation from us (cf. Rom. 8:31-39), though he can thwart God's testimony in our lives and possibly, based on 1 John 5:16-17, take a believer out of this world early!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

5:19 "We know that we are of God" This is the confident faith assurance, the worldview of a believer in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 John 4:6). All else is based on this wonderful truth (cf. 1 John 5:13). See note at 1 John 5:13.

▣ **"the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12). This was made possible through

1. Adam's sin
2. Satan's rebellion
3. each individual's personal choice to sin

SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

5:20 "We know" See full note at second paragraph of 1 John 5:13.

▣ **"the Son of God has come"** This PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE affirms the incarnation of the divine Son. Deity with a human body was a major problem for the Gnostic false teachers who asserted the evilness of matter.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF GOD

▣ **"has given us understanding"** This is another PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Jesus, not the Gnostic false teachers, has provided the needed insight into Deity. Jesus has fully revealed the Father by means of His life, His teachings, His actions, His death and His resurrection! He is the living Word of God; no one comes to the Father apart from Him (cf. John 14:6; 1 John 5:10-12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM

▣ **"we are in Him who is true; in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life"** The first phrase "in Him who is true" refers to God the Father, but the person referred to in the second phrase, "the true God," is harder to identify. In context it seems to also refer to the Father, but theologically it could refer to the Son. The grammatical ambiguity might be purposeful, as it is so often in John's writings, for one to be in the Father one must be in the Son (cf. 1 John 5:12). The deity and trueness (truth) of both the Father and the Son may be the intended theological thrust (cf. John 3:33; 7:28; 8:26). The NT does assert the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 1:1,18; 20:28; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13; and Heb. 1:8). However, the Gnostic teachers would have also affirmed the deity of Jesus.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUE" (the term) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" (the concept) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:21

[21]Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

5:21

NASB	**"guard yourselves from idols"**
NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta	**"keep yourselves from idols"**
TEV	**"keep yourselves safe from false gods"**
NJB	**"be on guard against false gods"**
REB	**"be on your guard against idols"**

This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, an emphatic general truth. This refers to the Christians' active participation in the sanctification (cf. 1 John 3:3), which they are already enjoying in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:5).

The term idols (which is used only twice in John's writings, here and in an OT quote in Rev. 9:20), either relates to the teachings and lifestyles of the false teachers, or because the Dead Sea Scrolls use this term in the sense of "sin," the terms "idol" and "sin" may be synonymous.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the three major tests that assure believers that they are in Christ.
2. What do the terms "water" and "blood" refer to in 1 John 5:6 and 8?
3. Can we know that we are Christians? Are there some Christians who do not know?
4. What is the sin that leads to death? Can it be committed by a believer?
5. Is it God's keeping power or our own efforts which deliver us from temptation?

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